

Town of Holliston
Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
November 17th, 2020

The meeting was held remotely under the guidelines that were issued because of the emergency caused by the COVID-19 virus. All votes taken during this meeting were done as a roll call vote.

Mr. Szajda called the Finance Committee to order at 7:02PM. In attendance were Chairperson Ken Szajda, Vice Chair Dan Alfred, Vincent Murphy, Michelle Zeamer, Tim Maxwell and Clerk Mark Whittaker. Sue Nersessian was absent.

Other Notable attendees included Town Administrator Travis Ahern, Facilities Manager James Keast, School Business Manager Keith Buday, Superintendent of Schools Susan Kustka, School Committee member Anne Louise Hanstad, Fire Chief Cassidy, and Tina Hein of the Select Board.

Mr. Szajda asked for feedback on the draft warrant message for the Finance Committee report for the upcoming Special Town Meeting. Discussion and vote were deferred to the end of the meeting since we were discussing changes to some recommendations.

The Committee reviewed two School Department capital requests. The first was for a purchase of Chromebooks. Money for these typically would be requested in May at the May Town Meeting, but due to long lead times on purchasing the School Committee felt it was prudent to make the request for the Special Town Meeting. The second request was to provide funding for the completion of the field house wall panels—part of a green communities grant that was funded.

The Finance Committee asked about operational spending for the schools and the impact that COVID was having on the budget. Ms. Hanstad noted that at their current rate of COVID expenditures that a worst-case spend to cover COVID expenses for the remainder of the school year would be \$682,000. This was an absolute worst-case based on no new federal assistance. New federal stimulus would obviously change that number dramatically. If a new federal stimulus is provided equivalent to the current CARES act then the number would be much lower, likely around \$120,000.

Chief Cassidy discussed the financial impact of the COVID Virus. Chief Cassidy clarified what was and was not eligible for CARES Act funding, and what was and was not eligible for FEMA Funds. Chief Cassidy did not anticipate coming to the Committee for any substantial COVID-related asks this fiscal year.

Attention then turned to finalizing outstanding recommendations for the upcoming Special Town Meeting. Below are the recommendations that resulted from those discussions.

Article 5: A motion was made that the finance committee recommends that the town appropriate the following sums from the capital expenditure fund; \$20,100 for a facilities manager vehicle, \$10,000 for steps and railings at 1750 Washington St., \$150,000 for septic work at town hall, \$370,000 for replacement of air packs and bottles for the fire department, \$25,500 for ambulance tone and voice

paggers, \$166,125 for a trackless mower with attachments for the DPW/Highway Department, \$55,000 for a Chevy Silverado full equipped for the DPW/Highway Department, \$151,525 for 3 police vehicles, \$90,000 for insulation work at the High School Field House, and \$112,066 for Chromebooks for the school department, and also appropriate \$65,000 from free cash for maintenance and improvements at the library, and \$40,000 from free cash for improvements at the Senior Center. This motion was made by Vincent Murphy and seconded by Tim Maxwell. The motion passed 6-0.

Article 6: A motion was made that the Finance Committee will make a recommendation at the town meeting. This was moved by Vincent Murphy and seconded by Michelle Zeamer. This motion passed 6-0.

Article 7: A motion was made that finance committee recommends that the town appropriate \$418,000 from the capital expenditure fund for the purposes stated in the article. This was moved by Vincent Murphy and seconded by Michelle Zeamer. This motion passed 5-0-1 with Dan Alfred Abstaining.

Article 15: A motion was made that the finance committee recommends that the town appropriate \$40,000 from free cash for the purpose stated in the article. This was moved by Vincent Murphy and Seconded by Michelle Zeamer. The motion passed 6-0.

As a follow-on to the school presenting a large potential need to cover COVID expenses for the remainder of the school year, the Committee discussed whether the reserve fund should be bolstered further just in case. After some discussion it was agreed that the Finance Committee should revise our recommendations to reflect a need for a higher amount in the reserve fund.

A motion was made to reconsider Article 1 and Article 3. This was moved by Vincent Murphy and seconded by Dan Alfred. This motion passed 6-0.

Article 1: The motion was made that the finance committee recommends that the town raises and appropriates the amounts shown in the "FY21 Total" column in the table in article 1 with the following two exceptions. The reserve fund would be \$240,000 and unemployment would be \$150,000. This was moved by Dan Alfred, seconded by Vincent Murphy. This motion passed 6-0.

Article 3: The committee moved to recommend the town raise and appropriate \$400,000, and appropriate \$384,000 from the overlay for the purpose stated in the article. The motion was made by Dan Alfred, seconded by Vincent Murphy. The motion passed 6-0.

At this time the warrant message was discussed. A motion was made to approve the warrant message with updated numbers as a result of the votes taken tonight, and additional color around capital expenditure. This was moved by Vincent Murphy and seconded by Dan Alfred. This motion passed 6-0.

With further discussion – it was determined that the funding needed to come out of the funds differently than stated above. A motion was made to reconsider Article 3. This was moved by Vincent Murphy and seconded by Dan Alfred. This motion passed 6-0.

A motion was made to alter article 3 to state that the committee recommend the town raise and appropriate \$300,000 and appropriate \$484,000 from the overlay for the purpose stated in the article. This motion was made by Dan Alfred and seconded by Vincent Murphy. This motion passed 6-0.

A consent agenda was discussed, but it was deemed that nothing was worth grouping. The only articles that could be grouped could be accomplished faster as separate articles.

A motion to adjourn was made by Dan Alfred, seconded by Vincent Murphy. The motion passed 6-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 9:38 PM.